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ABSTRACT

The five papers in this edition address issues of general interest in distance education. In the first paper, "Study Methods and Study Notes: Interim Report," Stephen Relf and Terry Geddes report on a study designed to identify patterns of use and trends in the ways in which distance students use their study notes. In the second paper, "Quality and Standards in Open Learning in Charles Sturt University," David Meacham proposes guidelines for design and quality control in the production of study materials. "Modularization," which is addressed by Wendy Pearce and Sandy Wright in the third paper, is associated with a recent Charles Sturt University National Priority Reserve Fund Grant. It is suggested that this paper should provide a worthwhile basis for staff who are considering or involved with modularization of their study materials. The fourth paper, "In Defence of Residential Schools," by Jenni Brackenreg and Jan Allan, presents a defence of the traditional residential school model, which is firmly rooted in the origins of Australian distance education. In the final contribution, "Review of Brackenreg and Allan's 'In Defence of Residential Schools,'" Peter Donnan seeks to extend the terms of the debate about the effectiveness of residential schools. References are listed for each of the individual papers. (BBM)

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OCCASIONAL PAPERS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

NUMBER 12

Charles Sturt University

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

David Roberts, formerly Associate Head of the Division of External Studies at Charles Sturt University-Riverina, had a long term involvement with and commitment to *Occasional Papers*. His first edition was the number 3 issue in January 1985 and his final edition was the number 11 issue in April 1991. He accepted a position at the University of Tasmania at the beginning of 1991. Many of us who worked with him at Charles Sturt University appreciated his commitment to distance education students, his scholarship and special research interest in student attrition rates, and above all the enthusiasm and professionalism which he brought to distance education matters generally.

While *Occasional Papers* remains essentially an in-house publication for CSU staff on the three campuses who are involved with distance education, this edition seeks to continue the traditions that David Roberts developed and it contains five contributions of general interest.

The first paper is an interim report of a Mitchell campus study which explores how distance students use their study notes; the patterns of use and trends identified may be helpful in reviewing CSU study materials generally.

'Quality in distance education' was the theme for the ASPESA Biennial Conference held at CSU-Mitchell from 16-19 July 1991 and the second paper presents a blueprint for quality control at CSU. The Open Learning Institute at CSU was established in 1991 so readers should be aware that Mitchell, Riverina and Murray campuses formerly had different design/quality control systems in relation to the production of study materials. This paper proposes guidelines for future directions.

The third paper on modularization is associated with a recent CSU National Priority Reserve Fund Grant and this paper should provide a worthwhile basis for staff considering or involved with modularization of their study materials.

The fourth paper, originally published in *ASPESA Papers*, number 11, December 1991, presents a defence of the traditional residential school model, an institution firmly rooted in the origins of Australian distance education.

The final contribution is a review which seeks to extend the terms of the debate concerning the effectiveness of residential schools.

Finally, in an attempt to promote interaction and an exchange of views on any distance education matters raised in this edition of *Occasional Papers*, readers are invited to write to the editor and their responses will be included in edition number 13.

Peter Donnan
Editor

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SPECIAL NOTE

Written permission to reprint the paper 'In defence of residential schools' (Brackenreg & Allan) was granted by the Australian and South Pacific External Studies Association. This article first appeared in *ASPESA Papers*, No. 11, December 1991.

STUDY METHODS AND STUDY NOTES: INTERIM REPORT

Relf, S. and Geddes, T.

Abstract

This is an interim report of a study that looks at how distance education students use the study notes sent out to them. The study is looking for patterns of use by groups of students grouped according to their approach to learning as determined by the Biggs Study Processes Questionnaire. This paper looks at the procedure of the study, particularly at the use of the SPQ and the interview questions. This paper also looks at the preliminary analysis of the results. There are trends already appearing in student use according to their approach to study. Ultimately the information obtained concerning students' use of these study materials will be used to review the design of all study materials produced by Charles Sturt University.

Introduction

One of the paradoxes of educational development is that in order to improve student learning we must give attention to teaching and assessment. And in order to improve teaching and assessment we must look to student learning. The paradox in other words is that learning skills problems are inseparable from the structure and methods of teaching and assessing. This is the conclusion Ramsden (1986) reached after reviewing the development of student learning research. The studies Ramsden reviews are principally from two research perspectives. One was the phenomenographic perspective of the Gotenberg school (Marton and Saljo, 1976a and 1976b); the other from the psychometric perspective of works like Biggs (1987a). Both perspectives which focused on trying to understand the students' own description of what learning means to them, is one half of the paradox Ramsden describes.

Other studies continue to analyse student approaches to learning. For example a study from the ethnographic perspective was of adult distance education students in West Australia (Small, 1986). It identified the more common learning strategies adopted by the students. Small found that the students who were less clear about their purpose of studying concentrated in their study on reading, note taking and summarizing all at lower level intellectual skills. Students who were clear about their reasons for studying, principally because it related to a clear career path they were frequently working in, adopted more organized study strategies with careful note taking and summarization. Small noted that the students who adopted the former lower skills strategy were more likely to drop out.

The same conclusion that students using lower level skills have a higher attrition rate than students using higher level skills, was found in a study which correlated learning strategies and dropout rate (Harper & Kember, 1987). The learning strategies measure used was the Approaches to Studying Inventory based on the Gotenberg school, which examined how students learn and how they experience their courses. Harper & Kember used a discriminant analysis between persisters and non-persisters and the sub-scales of the Approaches to Studying Inventory and found that 'the variable which most strongly discriminates between persisters and non-persisters ... is the surface approach' (1987, p.2). From this it was speculated that in order to reduce attrition rates, students approaches to study should be changed from a surface approach through instructional design and textual layout. The design of notes to achieve this was addressed in a summary of studies. In these studies Harper and

Kember found that the areas of assessment; workload; and course design and structure were addressed.

A not dissimilar review by Marland and Store (1982) was undertaken in order to find out how distance learners processed and reacted with instructional material. This survey summarised studies which assessed the use of instructional devices such as: advance organizers; overview; pretest; objectives; inserting questions; and finally typographical considerations. The focus of the study was not on student approach to learning but on a structural perspective 'that there is a need to structure materials in a way which will provide the student with greatest access to content' (1982, p.74).

Both Harper and Kember, (1987) and Marland and Store (1982) addressed separate aspects of the paradox from a literature review rather than by observation. Observation though was used in a study of 12 students at Gippsland when their learning approach and how they used the study materials was addressed (Parer, 1988). Parer assessed both aspects of the paradox: student approaches to learning and to the structural aspect of teaching and assessment. Parer also assessed student use of textual design features but this will not be discussed here.

To measure student approach to learning, Parer used two measures. One was the Approaches to Studying Inventory, used by Harper and Kember (1982) mentioned above; the other was the Biggs Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) (Biggs, 1987a). Parer found that each questionnaire had value and concluded that although the Approaches to Studying Inventory provided 'a more useful break down of the components involved in learning ... both questionnaires appear to be useful in establishing a student profile' (1988, p.80). The advantages of the SPQ is that it provides a clear and easily accessible picture of the student as a learner as above average (+), average (0) or below average (-) on the various approaches to learning. The average measure is a comparison of the individual score against an Australian tertiary student population. For these reasons the SPQ was used in our study.

The SPQ, designed to measure student approaches to learning, proceeds from a theoretical model of cognitive and affective components in the learning process. It assumes that the relationship between study processes, personality, motivation and academic performance are the main influences affecting the suitability of student study processes. In other words, there is a 'psycho-logic' of how people perceive their role in a particular situation. Students who are interested in a particular subject for instance, will find out as much about it as possible; students who are not interested in what they were studying would do as little in order to pass the subject; while students who are determined to obtain a qualification will adopt any strategy that helps them achieve their goal. These three archetypal descriptions are called the deep, surface and achieving approaches to learning by Biggs.

Biggs divides each approach into two distinct components of student learning. Students for example who are motivated such as the interested student scenario just described, will be likely to adopt a study pattern or strategy as Biggs called it, that would suit their motivation. The two components are called motivation and strategy. The combinations of the two components defines an approach to learning.

Two of the approaches relate to cognitive processing and the pheno-menographical terminology of deep and surface are used. Biggs' components of the approaches, motivation and strategy, are used to differentiate between aspects of an approach. His delineation of deep strategy and deep motivation; and surface strategy and surface motivation is not dissimilar to the description of deep and surface learning as explained by Marton and Saljo (1976a & 1976b).

Marton and Saljo found that students would adopt a way of processing information according to their reasons for studying which Biggs also observed though he labeled them strategy and motivation.

Biggs' third approach to study, achieving, refers to the student's organization as a strategy and their drive to succeed as motivation. This drive to succeed is extrinsic to their interest in the subject and so different from intrinsic motivation found in the deep approach (Biggs, 1987a, pp.9-11).

Parer set out 'to improve distance teaching practices and techniques' as one of the aims of the research (1988, p.2). Parer cited the study of Marland and Store (1982) along with those of Morgan, Gibbs and Taylor (1980) and Roe (1981) as addressing this question of student use of the study material institutions provide.

In an attempt to address both aspects of the paradox this study follows after Parer's study and uses the SPQ and a structured interview. However it differs in scope and size. Parer used twelve students in the study. We have decided to have about one hundred useable interviews and then will attempt to find a pattern of how the study guides were used according to the study approaches adopted. Parer also interviewed students in two subjects, History and Sociology. We have interviewed students in 30 distance education units from the schools of Business, Social Science and Welfare Studies, Health Administration, and Applied Sciences.

The purpose of our study was to ascertain patterns of use of study guides according to students approaches to study profile derived from the Biggs' SPQ.

Method

During the residential school periods in both semesters of 1991, 119 students volunteered to take part in the survey. To get this number, 962 students in 30 Units were asked to give up two hours of their time at their one week residential school. The students were asked to complete the Biggs SPQ and then be interviewed about their use of one of the topics of their Study Guide. After the interview the study profile of the student was explained to them and they were counselled about the strengths and weaknesses of their study profile. In all 114 interviews were able to be used and in this interim report 39 of the first semester interviews are used.

The criteria for choosing Units were twofold. First the Units had to be the equivalent of second year internal Units. The intention in choosing this type of Unit was to interview students who were experienced distance education students. Most students interviewed had been studying by distance education for at least two years; those that were not were discarded from the sample. The second criteria was that the instructional features of the Units be similar and fairly structured.

The Study Guides were divided into discrete topics which had all or most of the following instructional devices:

an introduction cum advance organizer;

objectives;

statement of required and/or optional readings;

a commentary or overview;

a summary;

questions; and

a list of key concepts.

Each device had its own intrinsic pedagogical merits and none was sufficient in itself. The Study Guides consisting of these devices provide motivation, orientation, a clear list of study tasks, familiarization of scope, broad structural materials and revision exercises.

Experimental procedure

The transcript of the interview with each student was analysed prior to an inspection of the student's SPQ profile. The questions used in the interview were designed to indicate: the sequence in which the devices were used; the most or least useful devices; note taking practices; and the preferred way of studying the topic. The full list of questions are included in Appendix 1.

The questions were intentionally open ended to elicit as much information about the strategies students were using - deep, surface or achieving. Each transcript was assessed by each researcher individually and a profile as above average(+), average (0) or below average (-) for each approach to learning was described for each student. The criteria for choosing a profile of student approach was guided by descriptions of the approaches in the literature (see Appendix 2). Then together we compared the profiles obtained for each student. Where there were differences an attempt was made to resolve differences and agreement was reached in the majority of cases.

The profile obtained from the analysis of each transcript was then compared with the respective students SPQ profile. If there was substantial agreement or insignificant disagreement between these profiles in a significant number of cases then the proposition that students tend to use their study materials in a way predicted by their SPQ profile would be accepted.

If the above proposition is true, students will be grouped according to their SPQ profile and the transcripts of each group will be examined in order to identify any trends in student use of material for each group.

Results to date

The tapes resulting from interviews with 39 students have been summarily transcribed. These interviews took place during residential schools in the first semester 1991. The SPQ profiles of these students are presented in Appendix 3. Note that 10 students have been classified as having an 'achieving approach' and that 11 students are not classified. This latter group results from ambiguity in each SPQ profile.

Ignoring the 11 unclassified results, the remaining 28 cases constitute the population on which the following results are based. The result of the classification of each student's learning approach based on the analysis of the information obtained by interview was compared with the student's SPQ profile. These comparisons showed that there was total agreement in 60% of cases and a total mismatch in 14% of cases. A match occurred when the category a student was placed in as a result of the consideration of the interview transcript was the same as the category the student was placed in based on the SPQ profile. A mismatch occurred when these categories were different.

At this stage two factors appear to have hindered the classification of students on the basis of information obtained during the interview. These are:

* we have been working with summaries not full transcripts of interviews

* we found we had insufficient information of student motivation. Most of the interviews analysed at this stage do not include questions 14 and 15 which elicited information about student motivation (see Appendix 1).

Therefore, given this degree of uncertainty we reserve judgement about the extent to which a student's SPQ profile reliably predicts how a student will use learning materials.

Nevertheless, we have sorted the transcripts according SPQ profiles to see if there are any common elements in the approaches of the students in each of these groups. The clearest picture emerged in the 'achieving approach' group, the largest group. Table 1 shows the elements which have been identified in relation to this group.

Table 1: Common elements amongst achieving learners

Element	Number
Initial overview of learning	5
Uses most parts of the study guide	7
Reads widely	3
Reading reiteration	5
Checks learning	7
Notes: has routine/rationale	6
Takes 'too many' notes	4
Shows organisation	4
Shows high motivation	3

Given that students using an **achieving approach** are sometimes viewed as model students then the thoroughness indicated in Table 1, by using most parts of the study guide, checking learning (against objectives or questions) and having a thought out and regular scheme for note taking might fit that mould. Achieving students in some cases may be driven, that is they are anxious to do everything possible to ensure success and in this light it is interesting that four students confessed to writing too many notes.

Sketchy pictures have also emerged from the deep and surface learning groups although these groups have small numbers. **Deep learners** seem to make use of most or all elements of the study guide, to read widely and to read some things more than once. They mention a desire for understanding and are often 'smart' readers. They appear to have thought about how they might go about their learning tasks. **Surface learners** on the other hand use only part of the study guide and may work with a narrow focus e.g. working only from objectives or dealing only with subject matter related to an assignment. They avoid writing if possible i.e. they do not write notes but may highlight sections of a text; and they do problems 'in their head' not on paper.

The way learners with other approaches use study materials is not so clear at present. We expect this may change when we have full transcripts and more cases.

Acknowledgements

This project was sponsored by Mitchellsearch the private company of Charles Sturt University - Mitchell: we wish to acknowledge their support. We also wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the lecturing staff at Charles Sturt University-Mitchell for letting us use their Units as the background of this project. Finally we wish to thank Julie Tutton the office coordinator of the project and the staff of the Open Learning Institute at CSU-Mitchell for their cooperation.

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APPENDIX 1: Interview Questions

1. Have you studied this topic before? To what extent?
2. What was the sequence of learning tasks you undertook to deal with this topic? Study Guide suggests a number of things - introduction, overview, readings, summary etc. - What did you do? In what order?
3. Which sections of the Study Guide did you spend most/least time on? Why?
4. What aspects of the Study Guide helped you to understand the topic?
5. What aspects of the Study Guide inhibited your learning?
6. Can you suggest any additions to the Study Guide which would have helped you?
7. What is the best way to learn a subject like this?
8. If you make notes when you study, what and how much do you write? Why? Any examples...
9. Once you have read the Study Guide through when, and how often, do you come back to it?
10. When you come back to it, what do you do?
11. What use do you make of the suggested readings in the Study Guide?
12. Can you think of any better ways to get you to explore a topic further?
13. How did your study periods here compare to your study periods at home? Does this have any implications on the construction of the Study Guide?
14. Why have you undertaken this course of study? And why at Mitchell?
15. What sort of results have you got so far?

APPENDIX 2: Description of Approaches to learning

Surface approach

* poor academic self concept
* underestimate own performance relative to peers
* dissatisfied with own performance
* rote learning
* motivated by anxiety (negative motivation) re exams, meeting deadlines, fulfilling rigid institutional requirements (Source: Biggs 1987b, 15)
* Obtain qualification with minimal effort
* accurate but unintegrated recall of information (surface strategy-SS)
* motivated to reproduce material accurately (surface motivation-SM)
* main purpose is to meet requirements minimally (SM)
* a balance between working too hard and failing (SM)
* instrumental (SM)
* reproductive (SS)
* limit target to bare essentials (SS)
* reproduce through rote learning (SS) (Source: Biggs, 1987a,' 11-12)
* rote learning - centres on facts and details and rote learns them
* pragmatism - grade oriented, sees University qualification as a means to another end
* test anxiety - worries about tests, exams and confused by demands of course work
* class dependence - needs class structure, rarely questions lecturers or texts (Source: Biggs 1987a, 7-9)
* sees task as demand to be met, a necessary imposition of some other goal is to be reached, a qualification for instance
* sees the aspects or parts of the task as discrete and unrelated either to each other or to other tasks
* is worried about the time the task is taking
* avoids personal or other meanings the task may have
* relies on memorization, attempting to reproduce the surface aspects of the task (Source: Schmeck, 1983: quoted in Biggs, 1987a, 14-15)

Deep approach

* follow own academic interest
* relate to their own previous experience
* generate own examples
* follow up own leads
* like to be left alone to do all above
* may not be successful if own goals are not those of the institution(Source: Biggs, 1987b, 14)
* actualizes own interests

* is congruent with congruent interest
* leads to greatest structural complexity (DS)
* motivated to seek meaning (DM)
* likely to be conscious of learning strategies
* study is undertaken to actualize own interest and competence in particular academic subjects (DM)
* meaningful (DS)
* reads widely (DS)
* interrelate with previous relevant knowledge (DS)
* academic motivation - intrinsically motivated, sees University as end in itself
* internality - uses internal self determined standards of truth, not external authority
* meaningful learning - reads widely and relates material to what is already known, oriented to understand all input material
* openness - sees university as a place where values are questioned(Source: Biggs, 1987a, 7-9 & 11-12)
* is interested in the academic task and enjoys carrying it out
* searches for meaning inherent in the task, if a prose passage, the intention of the author
* personalises the task, making it meaningful to own experience and the real world
* integrates aspects or parts of the task into a whole (for instance, relates evidence to a conclusion) sees the relationship between this whole and previous knowledge
* tries to theorise about the task, forms hypotheses(Source: Schmeck, 1983: quoted in Biggs, 1987a, 14-15)

Achieving approach

* interested in getting good grades
* deliberate and careful planning
* ambitious
* have high academic self concept
* highly syllabus oriented
* organized note taking
* opportunistic
* competitive
* practice exam questions(Source: Biggs, 1987b, 14-15)
* publicly manifests one's excellence
* achievement motivated not intrinsically motivated (AM)
* strategy is whatever the student sees as most pertinent to higher grades (AS)
* study skills - works consistently, reviews regularly, schedules work.(Source: Biggs, 1987a, 7-9 & 11-12)

APPENDIX 3: Student profile from SPQ

No	SPQ Profile	Category	Age	Sex	Year of course
1	-+ 0- --	6	51	F	4
2	0+ 0- 00	6	53	F	4
3	0+ -- -0	6	32	F	3
4	-- 00 00	6	32	M	3
5	++ -- --	5		M	3
6	0+ +- +-	5	26	M	4
7	++ -- --	5	23	F	2
8	++ -0 00	5	30	M	3
9	+0 -- +0	4	24	M	2
10	+0 0- +-	4	29	M	3
11	++ -- 0+	4	33	M	4
12	00 ++ ++	3	42	F	5
13	+0 ++ ++	3	34	M	4
14	+0 ++ ++	3	41	M	3
15	00 00 ++	2	37	M	3
16	0- 00 ++	2	27	M	3
17	00 +- ++	2	31	F	3
18	0+ 0+ ++	2	32	F	3
19	00 0+ ++	2	32	M	3
20	-0 00 ++	2	41	M	5
21	-+ -- ++	2	42	M	5
22	00 00 ++	2	36	M	3
23	00 00 ++	2	28	M	5
24	0- 00 +0	2	27	M	3
25	+- ++ --	1	37	M	3
26	00 ++ 0+	1	38	F	5
27	0- 0+ -0	1	40	F	2
28	-- ++ 0+	1	44	M	3
29	-- 00 -+	NC	34	F	5
30	0- 00 0+	NC	43	M	5
31	-- +0 0+	NC		M	3
32	00 -+ +0	NC		M	4
33	00 0+ 0+	NC	42	M	4
34	00 -+ 0+	NC	49	F	5
35	00 +0 0+	NC	25	F	
36	-+ +0 00	NC	56	F	
37	+0 +0 0+	NC	24	M	
38	+- +0 00	NC	37	M	5
39	+- -0 0+	NC	30	M	3

The Categories are taken from Biggs (1987a). They are:

6	Low achieving approach
5	Surface approach
4	Surface achieving approach
3	Deep achieving approach
2	Achieving approach
1	Deep approach
NC	Not categorised

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN OPEN LEARNING IN CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY

Meacham, E.D.

Background

There is currently a great deal of interest in quality and standards, and their corollaries such as performance appraisal, evaluation, and cost benefit analysis. DEET has initiated several initiatives in this area, and The National Distance Education Conference (of which the Vice Chancellor is a prominent member) has commissioned an exhaustive report on 'Quality and Standards in Distance Education'.

In the near future the Australian and South Pacific Distance Education Association will publish a substantial collection of papers on the issue, arising from its 1991 Biennial Conference. In addition government agencies, private business and the public sector in general are becoming increasingly interested in quality as it relates to training. This interest is not confined to any particular country or sector; indeed the British Standards Institute has gone so far as advising trainers how to apply BSI5750 (originally intended for industry) to their activities.

This is but a brief overview, but it suffices to illustrate that preoccupation with quality education is not confined to the Open Learning Institute, the University as a whole, nor the higher education sector. The issue of quality in teaching, in all modes, is currently a major focus of The Educational Development Unit of the University, although it is anticipated that the Open Learning Institute will have substantial involvement in promoting high quality open learning and associated teaching. This paper will confine itself to quality and quality assurance insofar as it relates the design, development and production of open learning materials.

Introduction

Quality is important both in terms of production and of client usage. Unless there are quality control or assurance measures in place, then production becomes inefficient, slow and expensive, involving a seemingly endless iterative process, rather than using techniques to assure quality, as material is being produced.

To a degree this is done at present, as on a voluntary basis, staff are briefed on the requirements of open learning and invited to work with an instructional designer, who helps ensure quality as the open learning materials are being developed. The current system is only partially effective, as it is on a largely voluntary basis, and there are no definable criteria, by which quality can be judged in the formative stages. Therefore, at present materials are produced, which may or may not have been subject to quality assurance criteria which are not consistent throughout the OLI.

These comments should not be taken as pejorative, as to my knowledge the processes indicated above are the norm for institutions involved in distance and open learning. Iteration, together with trial and error, constitutes current practice in the field, so there is no easy solution of adopting the practices of a similar institution.

Definitions of Quality

Quality has numerous meanings, but the one most readily agreed upon is 'character with respect to excellence'.

Similar definitions abound in the copious literature on the quality of education, which frequently argues for the construction of instruments to measure quality with

reference to either norms or criteria. An example of this perspective is found in (Partington, G., 1991) who states, '...every coherent educational theory or practice requires publicly available criteria and standards of what it predicates as quality....Australian education is sorely deficient in the conceptualisation and provision of standards of educational quality'.

Conversely there are many who see the judgement of quality based on procedures and standards as being detrimental to the provision of appropriate learning experiences in a variety of contexts, e.g. (Ross, B., 1990), (Margison, S., 1990) adding another dimension of dissent by questioning the usefulness of quality measurements based on output, indicating that more attention should be paid to input analysis.

In view of these conflicting views which are but a small sample of the extent of the unresolved debate about the nature of quality, it is difficult to dissent from the views of Calvert, J., and Nunan, T. (1991) who comment, 'Given this situation, the term quality defies any definition which will be universally acceptable'.

However, since quality control, management or assurance must be predicated on some definition, it is necessary to avoid over-involvement in contentious debate and arrive at an operational definition which reflects what is required of open learning materials in Charles Sturt University, with its current clients and resources.

There are three notions of quality which may be of relevance to the current situation.

1. **Superficial Quality**

   This concerns image, superficial impressions and physical appearance. It has interest for the OLI when it is contracted to a client whose main concern is image rather than substance or achievement. It should be noted that disregarding the desire for glossy, prestigious productions, there is a level of appearance which is appropriate for the purpose for which any set of learning materials is produced, and this is a level that we should aim at.

2. **Input Quality**

   This includes the allocation of human and physical resources to the task of producing open learning materials. In the University, it refers to the qualifications, experience, competencies, and commitment of all staff involved: lecturers, contract authors, instructional designers, word processor operators and so on. It also refers to all hardware, software and other equipment used in the process.

   The problem with this approach is that the link between input and output may be difficult to establish with any precision; consequently any definitive cost benefit analysis is problematical. This approach to quality is useful when trying to impress potential clients of competence through resource commitment, rather than by exemplary products, and it also allows maximisation of services in a fee for service relationship.

3. **Fitness for Purpose**

   This is in some ways the most nebulous approach to quality, but also, potentially the most productive in our situation. In this sense quality materials would have an appropriate level of appearance only, which would, of course, vary with the clientele, stand up to cost benefit analysis, and most importantly, carry out the teaching/training task for which they are intended. This approach is very important in a market where success depends on producing a product that works at minimum cost.

Quality, quality control, quality assurance and standards should be considered in this definitional context.

Quality Control and Quality Assurance

Quality is a characteristic (fitness for purpose), whereas quality control and quality assurance are processes designed to help produce that characteristic. At present we have an unsophisticated and incomplete system of quality control which allows the identification of substandard materials, which are modified, recycled or scrapped. The problem with this approach is that it is essentially reactive, rectifying errors at the last stages of the process, even after the materials have been despatched to clients.

The system may be better served by introducing a system of quality assurance rather than control. This has the implication of prevention rather than rectification of failure, whereby the whole process is seen in value added terms, with standards being established which will allow the identification of the degree of quality enhancement associated with each value added stage.

The problem with applying this type of analysis to our activities lies in difficulty of specification of standards. Educational criteria are often contentious and inconsistent in both definition and application. Nevertheless, criteria should be developed to ascertain quality, even if such criteria are modified in the light of experience.

Specifications

Freeman, R. (1991) emphasises the importance and difficulty of producing useful specifications applicable to the various stages of open learning materials design and development. He indicates one should aim for specifications that:

> 'commissioner and producer would agree are clear and precise;
>
> when used as criteria for monitoring progress produce highly consistent reject/accept decisions, when applied by a wide range of reviewers;
>
> when conformance is not present, yield a highly prescriptive revision requirement that leads to highly consistent changes when implemented by a wide range of producers;
>
> have a very high correlation between reviewers' measures of degree of conformance and learner performance;
>
> have the minimum reworking requirements and produce the best cost-benefit ratio.'

The selection of applicable criteria is an immense problem with philosophical, psychological, pedagogical and above all operational dimensions. What is needed here is some consideration of the art of the possible, where minimum standards are aimed at, which are based on easily recognised, and accepted criteria. The aim is simply to identify potential deficiencies in open learning material, during the course of production and rectify them through an ongoing, cost-effective process.

Criteria

The chosen criteria should relate to the following features, which are generally regarded as being necessary for materials meant to produce effective open learning:

- adequate goal definition, expressed in terms which can be readily understood;
- clear structure in terms of component items and relationships between them;
- comprehension levels consistent with client competence;
- exercises which encourage active learning;
- assessment items which are consistent with content concepts and client competence;

- consistency between goals, content, and assessment;
- layout and multi media presentation which reflects the features above;
- use of media appropriate to client and content.

Some consideration may also be given to the process of teaching in this mode. At the very minimum, clients will need to receive appropriate feedback on progress, and adequate access to academic staff. This is outside the main brief, but has been historically a source of much dissatisfaction, which has been handled at school and faculty level, again without any real consistency.

To return to the above criteria, they need to be related to the various stages of the production and delivery process. As a first attempt, using a print based model, I would suggest the following relationship between quality, process and criteria.

PROCESS	FEATURES	STAFF
	Key: AA Academic Authors DO Despatch Officer ID Instructional Designers PM Production Manager Pr Printery SL Student Liaison TA Teaching Academics WPO Word Processor Operators	
1. Briefing Authors	Workshops, consultation, design manuals	ID
2. Subject Outline	Plan of subject indicating schedules, assessment, content, media, modules	AA/ID
3. Manuscript	Document including readings, illustrations, references	AA/ID
4. Instructional Design	Editing, transformation, enhancement, surrogate examination	ID
5. Illustration	Preparation and final selection of all illustrations including readings	ID
6. Editing	Keyed in as draft, plain copy, printed	WPO
7. First Draft	Editing, sub-editing	ID
8. Proofing	Preliminary proofing	AA
10. Final Proofing	Camera ready copy	ID
11. Preparation for Print	All documentation, specification and copy	PM
12. Printing	Text, illustration, off-prints and covers	Pr
13. Collation	Binding, order, completion	Pr
14. Despatch	Timeliness and accuracy	DO
15. Feedback	Timeliness and helpfulness	TA
16. Accessibility	Availability and response	TA
17. Support	Availability and response	SL

1. Criteria

1.1 All staff new to writing open learning materials will receive a copy of *Distance Education: the Design of Study Materials*.

1.2 All staff new to writing open learning materials will attend a workshop on this activity.

1.3 All staff writing open learning materials will be allocated an instructional designer.

1.4 The instructional designer will work with the subject/module writer.

2. Each writer shall produce a plan of the subject including:

2.1 Identification - Name, Code, prerequisites, faculty;

2.2 Assistance - liaison, counselling, academic, teleconferencing;

2.3 Introduction - to subject area and writer;

2.4 Aims and Objectives - general purpose and specific behaviours;

2.5 Organisation and Content - Modules;

2.6 Schedule of Study - recommended, linked with assessment;

2.7 Equipment and Texts - compulsory, useful and reference hardware/software;

2.8 Assignment topics and instructions, style guide, examples;

2.9 Examinations - length, time, location, type, examples.

3. The manuscript shall be:

3.1 readable;

3.2 complete with good copy of readings and illustrations;

3.3 referenced appropriately.

4. The instructional designer shall ensure that the work has:

4.1 clear aims and objectives.;

4.2 logical structure;

4.3 appropriate style and language levels;

4.4 opportunities for active learning;

4.5 self assessment questions with answers;

4.6 a minimum of ambiguity;

4.7 clear links between goals, content and assessment;

4.8 appropriate use of non-print media;

4.9 Conformity with AGPS Style Guide and is clearly marked up.

5. Illustrations should be selected which:

5.1 enhance the appearance of the material;

5.2 increase its instructional effectiveness;

5.3 are capable of reproduction of an acceptable quality;

5.4 do not have their use curtailed by copyright considerations.

6. Material shall be keyed in:

6.1 according to the current style guide and mark up;

6.2 with a minimum of typographic and layout errors.

7. The first printed draft shall be edited to remove, correct or suggest alternatives for:

7.1 residual spelling errors;

7.2 unclearly expressed text;

7.3 inappropriate punctuation;

7.4 layout errors and inconsistencies.

8. The first proof shall be made by the author who will identify and rectify:

8.1 residual errors of grammar, punctuation, spelling;

8.2 ambiguities or lack of clarity whether or not previously identified;

8.3 any errors of content;

8.4 bibliographical errors;

8.5 gross errors in layout and illustration.

9. The second draft shall:

9.1 be scrutinised by the instructional designer, who will approve or question all requests for correction;

9.2 incorporate all approved corrections;

9.3 be set out in final format;

9.4 be complete in terms of illustrations, off-prints, referencing, pagination, etc.

10. The final proofing will ensure:

10.1 the material is in camera ready form and is complete in every way.

10.2 contains no layout errors;

10.3 is consistent with the AGPS Style Guide.

11. The production manager will:

11.1 ensure any corrections from final proofing are carried out;

11.2 write all printing specifications;

11.3 send master copy and printing request forms to printery without delay;

11.4 check material is complete and in camera ready form;

11.5 order appropriate numbers of copies.

12. The printery shall, in a timely fashion:

12.1 produce the requested number of copies;

12.2 ensure copies are clean and without significant degradation of quality;

12.3 return any copy which cannot be printed to a satisfactory standard;

12.4 return master copies to production manager, immediately the job is completed.

13. The printery manager will ensure that:

13.1 the material is correctly collated;

13.2 the collated material is bound in the manner requested;

13.3 the bound material is sent to despatch with requested copies to the production manager.

14. The despatch officer will:

14.1 store all material received in a manner whereby it can be easily retrieved for despatch;

14.2 despatch it to students before the commencement of their study.

15. Teaching academics responsible for a particular subject will:

15.1 provide comprehensive and supportive feedback for all assignments within the period indicated in the subject outline;

15.2 Respond to queries relating to self assessment items and non-assessed activities.

16. Teaching staff will:

16.1 be available at indicated times;

16.2 be connected to answering machines or voice mail, or electronic mail;

16.3 respond to queries using the most appropriate media;

16.4 respond or indicate lack of ability to respond within 48 hours.

17. Student liaison officers will:

17.1 respond to queries where authorised and competent to do so;

17.2 direct all other queries to appropriate University staff.

These specifications need considerable refinement and move away from the area of learning materials. At this stage, they are suggestions for discussion only and should not be imposed until refined and accepted by interested parties.

It is hoped that a comprehensive system of quality assurance can be devised which ensures tasks are adequately carried out at each stage of the process of design, development, delivery, teaching and support, working first on print based courses, then applying the principles to multi-media presentations.

Comments are welcome to improve this draft in a way which will assist in improving the quality of open learning.

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MODULARIZATION

Pearce, W. and Wright, S.

Abstract

In 1992 Charles Sturt University received a National Priority Reserve Fund Grant to enable it to enhance the quality of its distance education materials and make them more appropriate for use in the context of open learning. Modularization is the result of this grant.

Introduction

We expressed an interest early in 1992 in carrying out research. We had started to formulate a quite separate research proposal when the Modularization project was initiated. As Instructional Designers this seemed to us an exciting and worthwhile investigation into the design and presentation of learning materials. As this paper will show, the project has the potential to allow a more proactive role for Instructional Designers, a closer relationship with authors and academics than previously, and the production of higher quality packages.

Modularization has many advantages for students, academics and support staff. We see modularization as an ongoing process, and while it is not a new concept, its implementation at CSU will see us breaking new ground.

That word!

The initial reaction to the word is 'what?'

Then, 'How do you spell it?'

Why use a 'z'?

While the word itself is clumsy and appears Americanised and implies a systematic and complex procedure to which academics and authors are invited to respond in their already overworked schedule, the process is very simple in fact.

Modularization is not designed to impose a regimen of work applied to subjects but is an attempt to provide more flexibility and accessibility to the material *already* written for students.

It must be stated that not all subjects will lend themselves to being modularized. It may be that authors have sound educational reasons for not modularizing their subjects.

Our Definition

Modularization is a process of redefining and reorganising existing subjects in order to produce sections of work that have recognisable boundaries, objectives, content, self-assessment items, formal assessment, and, very importantly, information on the requirements - either formal or informal (prior knowledge and experience) - that are necessary to successfully complete the module. The context of the module - where it articulates with other modules and its contribution to a subject or subjects and course overall - is also a characteristic of a module.

What are the Characteristics of a Module?

1. A module profile to provide information to the prospective student.

2. A statement of prerequisites that a student would normally need in order to successfully complete the module -

   e.g. prior knowledge, either formal or informal
   (life experience, job experience)
   other module(s) and/or subjects

3. Expected outcomes/learning objectives.

4. Designated content - content of module should be clearly described at the beginning of the module, as well as the resources provided.

5. The **context** i.e. an explanation of where the module fits into a subject or course, what has come before and what can come after it and whether it is largely skills-based or content-based.

6. Assessment that is clearly stated and which matches the measurable outcomes mentioned earlier.

7. Learning strategies involved in the module.

8. A proforma evaluation to allow the opportunity for feedback by the student on the effectiveness of the module.

9. A statement of the achievement levels for the skills and content knowledge attained to be recorded on completion of the module.

How does modularization differ from the usual arrangement of subjects?

Comparison of Traditionally Organized Subjects and Modules

Traditional Subjects	*Modules*
Subject content is fixed allowing learners little choice	Students are able to negotiate the modules which will make up their subjects
Students must enrol in a subject for specified blocks of time, eg a session	A flexible structure with variable entry and exit points. There are more opportunities for those who need retraining, or who are studying simply for interest or leisure
Students are in separate course groups	Students from different courses will be able to take the same module
Subjects are structured towards an end of session exam	Continuous assessment takes place, throughout and at the end of the module
Students can pass examinations by 'spotting' possible questions	Successful completion of a module will depend on the learner achieving all the learning outcomes
Entry levels are often pre-determined	Prerequisites are stated but entry levels more flexible and recognise informal qualifications
A teacher-centred approach is usually adopted	The emphasis is on student-centred learning - teacher is a learning facilitator

Source: Adapted from *Programme Planning: A Unit-based Approach.* Learning Media, Ministry of Education, Wellington, 1991, p.10.

Why is Modularization being introduced?

The aims of the University include its 'commitment to:

* the provision of the highest standard of undergraduate programs;
* access and equity to higher education for disadvantaged groups in Australia;

* increased support for the University's distance education students who are predominantly adult learners whose basic academic competencies at point of entry to the University may not be an adequate basis for successful tertiary study;

* improvement in the quality of all staff, but in particular academic staff.' (1992)

We are operating in a highly competitive environment where attracting students is now a major industry.

Open learning has become an innovative approach in distance education institutions since it is now realised that this is the way to attract many more students and provide greater flexibility and accessibility than previously.

A busier life style and the need to compete in a dwindling employment market mean students can seldom afford to take time out for full-time study. Distance education and open learning are then very attractive options.

Institutions need to respond quickly to such market demands. CSU, as a major Australian supplier of distance education materials, is uniquely placed to improve its position and provide better quality packages than ever before.

Improved access to any kind of education is in keeping with the Federal campaign for the 'clever country'.

This environment has produced more discerning open learners who are informed about what it is they want in materials and who are conscious of value for money.

Modularization provides a minimum standard as just *one way* of ensuring that students have more information and are clearer about what is required of them in terms of time commitment, skills and prior learning. Where such conditions exist, ie that a learner is fully informed of the relevance and requisites of an area of study, then learning is facilitated.

Benefits of Modularization for CSU

Modularization in this context will result in the following benefits:

1. Internal students could obtain all or any of the modules comprising a subject for remedial or enhancement purposes. It would also allow internal students on one campus access to specialist modules originating from another.

2. The scheme would open up possibilities for a reduction in contact time, in those cases where the aim is simply direct transfer of content in a mass lecture. This freeing up of academic time would assist staff in carrying out research and developing more interactive learning experiences where appropriate, all of which are consistent with the mission of the University.

3. Supplementary examinations could be centred on the particular modules where failure occurred, rather than the subject as a whole, thus lessening the possibilities of exclusion, increasing output and retention rates.

4. Summer session programs could be easily produced by using instructional modules, supported by minimal tutorial assistance, therefore a greater variety of programs could be generated to cater for students with diverse study goals.

5. New subjects could be generated with comparatively little effort by devising novel combinations of existing modules, which would benefit students with previous knowledge and experience, who may find the current, more limited, subject offerings repetitive or irrelevant to their individual needs.

6. The OLI could use the modules produced to devise courses applicable to the needs of particular clients, who were unwilling or unable to embark on a full degree course, yet who would desire tertiary level courses with relevance and credit value, which would assist them if they became regular students of the University.

7. The granting of more appropriate exemptions for previous study would be made possible by identifying work previously completed satisfactorily with modules rather than subjects, thus opening the way for partial, as well as full subject exemption. Similarly, there is greater opportunity for articulation with other courses, such as those offered by TAFE, as modularization allows precise identification of the relationship between one course of study and another.

8. Greater individualisation of courses would be facilitated by allowing students to take additional modules enhancing their studies or giving accelerated progression.

9. Revision will be made easier as individual staff members can work on discrete modules whilst preparation of the rest of the subject proceeds unhindered.

10. Greater flexibility in staffing will be permissible with proportional loads being calculated on a modular basis. This allows more precise calculation of loads for staff working on modules in more than one subject or in subjects which borrow modules from elsewhere. Such a system will also allow better deployment of specialist staff, whose specialist knowledge may enhance a variety of subjects.

11. Team based development of subjects, especially on more than one campus, will be made easier if, from the outset, there is a clear responsibility for specific modules.

12. Bridging modules may be developed after a careful examination of unrealised, assumed knowledge in first year subjects.

13. The provision of open learning materials in discrete portions with carefully defined objectives, content and associated assessment, is generally believed to facilitate learning.

14. Modularization builds on the success achieved in chunks of work that less confident students can manage.

The Role of the Instructional Designer

The Instructional Designer will aid the academic in reorganising his/her subject into appropriate modules. The I.D. and academic will be expected to work more as a team than ever before. The I.D. will be able to provide advice on educational issues concerning Modularization. It is a challenge that all of the Instructional Designers welcome.

Conclusion

The Modularization project is an interesting and exciting venture with advantages for both the recipient and provider of open learning materials. We believe that you will find that Modularization will add to the quality of your instructional materials.

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IN DEFENCE OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Brackenreg, J. and Allan, J.

The residential school has historically been an important part of Australian tertiary distance education. However, in the current climate of economic rationalization there is a trend for either deleting the residential school as a compulsory component of a course or for increasing tolerance of the suggestion that they might be abandoned. It is argued that a functional analysis of the role of the residential school as part of the process of distance education needs to be undertaken if future trends are to be anticipated and acted upon appropriately by distance educators. This paper suggests some functions of the residential school and introduces some arguments which defend the role of the residential school as a critical component of tertiary distance education.

Introduction

In the Dawkins' era, the residential school, as a traditional Australian linchpin of external studies has and will, increasingly become a vulnerable pawn in the game of educational economic rationalisation. The place of the residential school in tertiary external education should be debated before the unheralded demise of what to this date, has been an integral part of an external student's experience.

As tertiary teachers, the authors have become increasingly aware of a trend in external provision for either deleting residential schools as a compulsory component of a course, or for increasing tolerance of the suggestion that they might be abandoned. As students, the authors have experienced the residential school as an essential ingredient of their own tertiary education; this background has strengthened the conviction that residential schools should be retained as an essential part of distance education.

In any discussion of the residential school, there are two important questions to be addressed. The first asks whether the residential school can be divorced from tertiary distance education. If we answer 'yes', the second question asks to what extent is the current climate conducive to this being effectively achieved? For example, if one argues that electronic communication technology such as teleconferencing, computer networking and audio-visual media can take the place of the residential school, how realistic is this suggestion in the light of current financial and staffing factors? Until the first question is adequately debated, there is little point in discussing the second. This paper proposes some preliminary arguments which aim to address the first question.

Functional Analysis of Residential Schools

The first of our two questions requires us to consider which functions of a residential school are dispensable, but to do this, we need to work from some analysis of the functions of the residential school. Such a functional analysis would then make possible both an exploration of alternative modes for achieving these functions as well as an evaluation of whether these functions are a necessary ingredient of a tertiary distance education course. Three outcomes are possible from such an examination; the first, being that a residential school is the only mode through which

a function can be adequately fulfilled; the second, that alternative methods can replace the residential school as a provider of an identified function and the third being that a function, although desirable, is not a critical or essential variable of course provision. Of course it may be suggested that there are undesirable consequences of residential schools but the authors will not open this can of worms!

For the purposes of this paper the authors have compiled a list of possible functions. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but merely suggests some of the more obvious benefits to both student and teacher:

- networking with other students
- identification with the campus from which students will graduate
- access to campus resources
- enhancement of self-esteem through peer interaction
- access to a 'rite of passage'
- identification with the student culture
- the 'retreat' effect
- motivation to continue the course
- oral skill development
- lecturer responsibility and rapport with students
- learning 'the system'
- academic clarification of learning material.

Networking with other students

Our own students testify to the value of the networking opportunities gained through informal and formal interaction at residential school. The provision of student lists does not replace this, however useful they may be in identifying geographically close students. Weekend schools or other forms of direct contact (for example study groups) are merely other forms of the networking function which often occurs at the residential school. In terms of this function these types of contact groups are themselves modified forms of residential school rather than alternative modes. The essential principle here is that students have face-to-face contact with a group of fellow students. The compulsory residential school is a systematic means of achieving this for all students, whereas the optional, or ad hoc student-initiated, contact groups do not provide this opportunity for all. On a side note, the compulsory residential (as distinct from the optional) school allows some students to use available study leave provisions which might not otherwise be granted if attendance was merely optional.

Identification with the campus from which students will graduate

To graduate from an institution which one has never sighted is an alienating feeling, regardless of the possible compensatory contact. To have no memories of the university, not to have developed a feel for its buildings and for the ethos and culture of the living social environment - this can be truly distancing.

Access to campus resources

Residential school provides an excellent opportunity for students to make use of libraries, computer resources, counselling and educational services. Library research skills may never be developed by some purely external students who rely totally on the very efficient mail order services provided by most university libraries. Residential schools provide an opportunity for all distance education learners to gain 'hands on' experience in a tertiary library.

Enhancement of self-esteem through peer interaction

Most external students are mature age, from a diversity of backgrounds, and often have a socio-economic and/or educational disadvantage. A lowered sense of self-esteem is often a result of life experience, and the decision to undertake a course is often a threatening turning-point for the individual, which the residential school experience may turn into a challenge. Without the residential school the student will probably not experience the therapeutic effect of group interaction where others show respect for their ideas.

Access to a 'rite of passage'

The commitment, the financial outlay and the effort taken to travel to the initial residential school represent a new life stage. The profound experience of the first residential school marks for the student an important life change, and subsequent schools frequently become the focus of progression through a course. The intermittent upheaval of preparing to attend a residential school marks for the student and their significant others, this other 'academic' role.

Identification with the student culture

The term 'student culture' is a nebulous term which implies a range of issues. The residential school has the effect of concentrating the external student population in one place at the one time. That this 'place' is the tertiary campus lends ideological significance to the nature of the interactions which occur. Both the authors have conducted residential schools away from the campus environment with students who had no other direct contact with the institution and have found that the students felt this contact with the campus to be an imperative part of the residential school. Student interaction in the context of the on-campus residential school can be argued to have two main effects.

First, it may allow individuals to 'de-role' and then 're-role' in terms of critical changes in self perception. Many new students, especially the mature aged, may have ambiguous feelings about the 'role' of student, not only in the academic sense but also in relationship to their peers.

Second, the residential school potentiates the political influence of the student body. Communication which occurs only through electronic or written media is generally preoccupied with academic matters. Opportunity to participate in the residential school affords a politically cohesive medium; correspondingly, keeping students separated and controlling any group interactions they do have (for example, in teleconferences about academic matters) defuses the political power of the student body. The ramifications of this are great.

The 'retreat' effect

Maintaining tertiary study in a home environment can sometimes be a difficult experience because of competing demands for the student's time and attention. Removal from a familiar environment to participate in a residential school can allow a student to reflect in a flexible learning environment. Here the student can truly be a student, and enter into the world of academe for a short period of time; a world which they can then summons as a source of inspiration in the midst of the sometimes mundane activities of their lives.

Motivation to continue the course

The promise of participation in future residential schools often serves as a strong incentive for many students when motivation to continue reaches one of the inevitable lows which any student experiences. The committed student usually enjoys the experience of residential school, and finds attendance rewarding in itself.

Oral skill development

It is our contention that an individual aspiring to tertiary qualifications will want to make use of the opportunity afforded in tutorial and discussion sessions to develop oral communication skills. Such an environment is generally 'safe', and increases the chances of students being exposed to the social roles upon which many academic communication skills are dependent. A tertiary educated person must be able to express their ideas cogently, and the development of written communication must go hand in hand with verbal ability. The most isolated students (either socially or geographically) are the most disadvantaged when studying purely by distance education since this mode will inevitably focus on written rather than spoken communication, unless sophisticated alternative technologies are used. Being able to 'talk on one's feet' is expected of the competent tertiary graduate.

Lecturer responsibility and rapport with students

Lecturers, too, need the contact with their students if they are to feel part of the teaching-learning process. Residential schools require effort and careful planning by teaching staff if the students are to obtain the best possible value for the money and effort they expend in attending. Although we would not suggest that lecturers do not provide excellent feedback on written communications with their external students, personal, spontaneous contact can only enhance the sense of commitment felt by the lecturer.

Lecturers also benefit from the direct contact they have with their external students, developing rapport with individuals whom they would otherwise never meet.

Learning the system

From experience the authors have found that a residential school has further advantages in that students attending on-campus residential schools become more familiar with the norms and mores involved in negotiating with a tertiary education bureaucracy.

Academic clarification of learning material

The residential school allows students to explore and clarify complex concepts on a direct personal basis (using multidimensional resources) with the lecturer or other students. Although teleconferences and other aids (especially expensive and less available multi-media communications) can achieve this purpose to some extent the residential school remains an effective means for negotiating some of the more difficult or core academic tasks over which many students may otherwise unnecessarily suffer prolonged agony.

Concluding Comments

The authors recognise that attendance at residential schools is not without its costs. In particular, there are the costs to students both financially and personally. The institution itself must bear considerable financial cost to establish and run residential schools, and the lecturers often find themselves physically exhausted at the end of a residential week because of the heavy demands they place upon themselves and which students place upon them. It is considered by these authors, though, that such costs are far outweighed by the benefits obtained by their students attending a worthwhile residential school.

It is, however, incumbent upon lecturers to provide residential schools of a high quality and to recognise the hardships accrued by students. Those who argue for the distance education student to be saved the more obvious financial and organizational costs involved in attending a residential school may paradoxically also be arguing for them to pay even greater hidden costs; is not denying already disadvantaged students the rich resources and benefits of a residential school ultimately counterproductive? Campion (1991, pp.64-65) raises some relevant issues in regard to the disadvantaged student.

It is not being suggested that the residential school is the only means of fulfilling some or all of the functions discussed in this paper. The assumption, however, that technology or creative instructional design methods can in Australia replace the functions of the residential school, should be thoroughly questioned and debated. The forces for abandoning residential schools are insidious, covert and strongly vested in the economic rationalization of educational bureaucracy. Conversely, the propaganda that proposes such rationalization is often couched in the guise of educational principle or student need. Perhaps the heart of the question can be best addressed if we ask who most benefits from the decline of the residential school - student or bureaucracy?

The question of the residential school will increasingly raise its head as a central issue in distance education provision. A literature search by the authors of this paper reveals a lack of debate about the place of the residential school as a component of tertiary distance education. An internal study with external students enrolled at Charles Sturt University-Mitchell has revealed an overwhelming support for the continuance of residential schools. Reid-Smith (1981) and Roberts (1986) have both addressed general issues involved with the conduct of residential schools but it appears that there has been no other systematic discussion. It is suggested that educators in distance education should anticipate an amplification of this trend to question the place of the residential school as an important part of tertiary distance education in order adequately to evaluate an institution which has its roots so firmly embedded in the origins of Australian distance education.

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REVIEW

Article

Brackrenreg, J. and Allan, J. (1992) 'In defence of residential schools'. *ASPESA Papers 11*, December, 29-35.

The following review of 'In defence of residential schools' generally endorses the paper's central position and attempts to extend the debate in some areas. The authors' general view is that although residential schools have been an integral component of traditional Australian distance education, their value is being questioned and even dismissed in the new wave of economic rationalism enveloping higher education.

Jenni Brackenreg and Jan Allan's paper presents a defence of conventional residential schools based on the background and experience of the two authors who are lecturers in the School of Nursing and Health Administration, Faculty of Health Studies at Charles Sturt University-Mitchell. It touches upon underlying issues which are very pertinent in contemporary Australian distance education, including such questions as:

* To what extent should distance education students as independent learners remain detached from the institution in which they are enrolled?
* How do distance education institutions respond to the pressures on staff and resources during concentrated residential school periods?
* Do the advances in computer mediated learning and audio-visual technology provide a satisfactory alternative for traditional residential schools?
* In an age of increasing competition among DEC providers, and of genuine concerns about equity, access and participation, should tertiary institutions persist with the traditional residential school model?

'In defence of residential schools' affirms human and educational values at a time when the authors perceive them to be assailed by powerful economic and technological forces which are setting the agenda in distance education institutions. The paper does not purport to explore the anti-residential school case or other alternative programmes; its strength is that it outlines the value of residential schools, principally from a student's perspective, and therefore makes a positive contribution to the debate.

Many of the benefits of residential schools outlined in the paper emanate from being involved in a community of scholars where there is a certain spirit and educational ethos. The interaction, relationships and sense of identification with the culture of the university can only be properly engendered by personal attendance at residential schools, the authors maintain.

This model of interaction occurs most naturally within a community of scholars and Don McNicol, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney, recently stated it in the following terms:

> If people are serious about preserving the quality of universities, as far as their teaching is concerned, they should care, above all things, about the preservation of this interaction between students and students. When I listen to graduates talking about their undergraduate years they do not say a lot about the curriculum they were taught, and they tend to gloss over inadequacies in the facilities. But they have a lot to say about the people who taught them, and about the others members of their classes. The enduring benefits of university life seem to be related to what happens when groups of talented people with a common curiosity about a field of knowledge are put in one another's company. If our teaching can achieve this then the quality of the University will be preserved.
>
> (*The Gazette*, March 1992)

It seems to me that the type of interaction described in this quotation summarises the case presented in Jenni Brackenreg and Jan Allan's paper: they endorse this type of interaction in a distance education context and believe that it can only be cultivated in a residential school setting; conversely, they find it alienating and saddening that students graduate from an institution they have never attended.

The paper distinguishes between the interaction which occurs at residential schools and that which occurs off-campus through computer technology, audio-visual communication and creative instructional design. They suggest that the latter mode of interaction has a stilted dimension remaining at the level of academic discourse. The view of learning implied in the paper is not just cognitively based; references to self-esteem, negotiating educational bureaucracies, and identification with student culture suggest a broader commitment to the whole person. This broader view would also be accepted by D. Kember (1989) who argues that students need to integrate personal, family, social, work and academic components if they are to successfully complete distance education courses. It is true that educational technology, in the form of electronic mail, videoconferences, teleconferences, Voicemail and CD-ROM multi-media materials simulates real life situations with remarkable verisimilitude but the authors' conviction is that off-campus, technology mediated learning does not approximate to the experience provided by residential schools.

While it is true that the decline in residential schools has been considerably influenced by the new economic rationalism, as the paper argues, not all of the arguments opposing residential schools are financially driven. J. Eiseman and M.J. Mahony (1992) maintain, that there is a substantial educational rationale for alternative approaches to conventional residential schools. They believe that the best learning environment is one selected from the students' own world rather than the residential school setting where they may be protected by the group. Learning objectives can be achieved in working environments where students need to rely on a network of friends, colleagues and industry contacts. In the case of Eiseman and Mahony, for instance, their assessment activities were structured so that students had to use different sets of horticultural firms to achieve the learning outcomes. To some extent this approach substitutes the ethos of the industry for that of the university and the focus is more on the efforts and independence of the individual learner.

Issues of equity, access and participation constitute substantial arguments against residential schools and need to be considered carefully in the debate. In reality the issues associated with economic rationalism are very complex and in dual mode institutions such as Charles Sturt University, where the needs of full time and distance education students have to be counterbalanced, the logistics of residential schools complicate the equation even more so. The complexities become more apparent when national and institutional trends are explored. Some of the conclusions of a recent study by Cameron et al (1991:10) were that:

> "It is clear from this national study of on-campus requirements of the distance education providers that there is a range of practices and philosophies regarding the need/requirement for on-campus attendance. Furthermore, it was found that very few institutions have documented their philosophy or rationale for residential schools and as a consequence the rationale on residential school provision in a number of instances could be said to be of questionable educational validity.
>
> Regarding the costing of on-campus activities, it was very clear that none of the institutions has in place a costing system for such activities. This was largely a function of the costing practices within institutions which by and large included the costs of these activities within costs of running the institution. However, there was a general concern that the costs of on-campus attendance need to be contained and strategies put in place that were alternatives to such attendance. The majority of institutions was not aware of the cost of on-campus attendance to students but there was general acknowledgement that it would be difficult to pass further costs on to students."

Various understandings of residential schools have surfaced in *Occasional Papers* over the years. In the first issue Edward Reid-Smith (1981:12) wrote:

> "Residential schools should not be used for low interaction features such as lectures, but rather for high interaction such as personal tuition and group discussions (as well as practical work)"

Writing five years later, Frank Molloy (1986:4) stated:

> "Years ago there was a belief that students should attend schools since they would benefit in a number of ways from physically being at the institution from which they were gaining an award. This theory seems to have little validity today: residential schools have to be justified, and most academic staff, I suspect, conduct them to cover topics which can only be dealt with in a face-to-face situation."

In this issue Jenni Brackenreg and Jan Allan argue that:

> "The essential principle here is that students have face-to-face contact with a group of fellow students. The compulsory residential school is a systematic means of achieving this for all students, whereas the optional, or ad hoc student-initiated, contact groups do not provide this opportunity at all."

What emerges is a complex educational spectrum involving a range of priorities. Professional associations and outside agencies sometimes indicate a strong preference for compulsory residential schools when they recognise courses. Students make comparisons between institutions which do and do not offer residential schools and their choices are reflected in the marketability of different Distance Education Centres (DEC) courses.

In summary, then, this paper presents a strong case for maintaining the conventional residential school model which has worked so well in Australian distance education; it outlines the value of residential schools for students and teaching staff; it challenges the agenda of many distance education institutions; and it asserts the primacy of educational and human values over economic and technological considerations. For these reasons, I believe, it makes a positive contribution to the debate about residential schools.

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